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SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT OPENS FOR 2004

REF: A. A. 03 MAPUTO 1765

[1](#)B. B. 03 MAPUTO 1604
[1](#)C. C. MAPUTO 220
[1](#)D. D. MAPUTO 083

[1](#)1. (U) On March 1, the GRM opened its 10th session of Parliament, during which President Chissano is expected to make his final address to the body before stepping down at the end of the year. At the same time, the 2004 presidential-hopefuls, Afonso Dhlakama (RENAMO) and Armando Guebuza (FRELIMO), took to the roads and held press conferences on hot Mozambican political topics: Dhlakama on the growing issue of trafficking in persons, Guebuza on the need to attract more foreign investment (REF A, B). These events signaled the start of the 2004 political year in Mozambique, one that will measure the maturity and success of Mozambican democracy, as the two major political parties will compete in national elections, a new president will be named, and a new GRM instated. Also noteworthy in 2004 was the appointment of a new Prime Minister, Luisa Diogo, current Minister of Planning and Finance, to the remainder of Chissano's term (managing both positions) (Ref C).

[1](#)2. (U) Eduardo Mulembwe, President of the Parliament, opened the session by announcing 22 agenda items that Parliament will discuss in 2004. Hot items include: question and answer sessions with the GRM, a report by the Social Action Committee on resettlement of flood victims, a report on the revision of the Constitution, revision of the Anti-Corruption Law (many deputies feel the law should be tougher), revision of the electoral law (more specifically, how it handles vote tabulation), and a draft law on tourism and telecommunications.

[1](#)3. (U) Parliamentary party leaders followed Mulembwe, taking the floor to discuss pertinent, sensitive issues such as the BCM fraud case, trafficking in persons/organs, economic growth and development, and revision of the 2004 electoral legislation. Manual Tome, Head of the FRELIMO parliamentary bench, applauded the success of FRELIMO in improving conditions for economic growth, citing the most recent GDP growth rate of 7% (2003). Tome heralded national expansion of the power grid, water supply, and the health and education systems as major FRELIMO successes. On the judicial front, Tome praised the BCM trial, calling the process "objective" and a booster to the credibility of the Mozambican judicial system (REF D).

4.(SBU) Countering FRELIMO's self-praise, Ossufo Quitine, RENAMO parliamentary bench leader, remarked that the five-year mandate of the FRELIMO government was marked by "disastrous economic and financial decisions," resulting in the bankruptcy of many businesses and increased unemployment. RENAMO harshly criticized the handling of the BCM trial, calling its proceedings a "farce." Finally, RENAMO focused heavily on revision of the electoral law to include an extra layer of vote tabulation at the district level. RENAMO believes that a more thorough vote tabulation process will allow for greater transparency in the 2004 national elections (to be held sometime between October-December). (COMMENT: While this if feasible and potentially valuable for the sake of transparency, it will make the tabulation process more cumbersome and bureaucratic. RENAMO's request to add layers to the process continues the opposition party's theme of being cheated out of votes during the electoral process by FRELIMO during the transport of votes from the district to the provincial capitals. END COMMENT).

[1](#)5. (SBU) COMMENT: The current session is likely to be a noteworthy if not particularly productive one on the legislative front. President Chissano will give his last annual address to the Parliament, as will Attorney-General Joaquim Madeira. Madeira's speech is likely to feature a thorough cross-examination by RENAMO deputies on whether the Attorney General's Office will make the decision to prosecute Nypine Chissano, the President's son, implicated during last year's trial of those found guilty in the 2000 murder of the famous journalist Carlos Cardoso. President Chissano's last parliamentary session has several important issues to address in the 10 months ahead, with corruption and electoral law reform of significant interest. Because this is an election year, drastic policy changes or legal revisions are not expected. The biggest GRM issue to watch for will be how the 2004 elections are conducted and how the outcome of those

elections will change the political, economic, and social
landscape of Mozambique. END COMMENT.
LA LIME